Navigating trauma for kids & teens: back-to-school and COVID-19

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Meet Kyleigh!

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What we’ll talk through:

+ What is trauma and how does it affect a child or teen’s brain?
+ How COVID-19 has increased traumatic stress
+ Explore ways trauma presents itself in the school setting
+ Learn ways parents, caregivers, teachers, and school administrators can provide support to kids and teens experiencing traumatic stress
What is trauma and how does it work?
What is trauma?

“An event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” ¹

¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
How can trauma affect the brain?
What are some symptoms of trauma in children?

- Increased anxiety and depression
- Hyperactivity and lack of impulse control
- Lack of ability to self-regulate
- Difficulty focusing
- Dissociation
- Challenges with executive functioning
- Difficulty connecting with adults
- Internalizing vs externalizing behaviors
Where does COVID come in?
Let’s tell it like it is….COVID-19 has been a traumatic experience.

COVID has led to...

- Food insecurity
- Loss & grief
- Worry, stress, & fear
- Significant increase in depression & anxiety diagnoses in kids and teens
- Social isolation & lack of community
- Abrupt routine changes
- Loss of income
- Lack of access to healthcare
Trauma & going back-to-school
How can trauma show up in the classroom?

- Social challenges
- Forgetfulness
- Increased absences
- Falling asleep in class
- Negative self-talk
- Oppositional behaviors
- Attention seeking
- Difficulty staying in seat during instructional time
- Difficulty engaging in general
What do kids need to thrive?

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs

- **Self-actualization**: desire to become the most that one can be
- **Esteem**: respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom
- **Love and belonging**: friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection
- **Safety needs**: personal security, employment, resources, health, property
- **Physiological needs**: air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction
How can we support kids & teens experiencing trauma?
7 tips to help a kid or teen through trauma

- Acknowledge and identify emotions
- Encourage co-regulation
- Emphasize positive attention
- Decrease stimulation
- Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable steps
- Meet them where they are
- Designate a calm down corner or box
Resources & places to turn

- 504 plans
- IEPs
- School counselors
- Therapists & coaches
- Online resources
- Brightline behavioral & mental health services
About Brightline
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Q&A

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